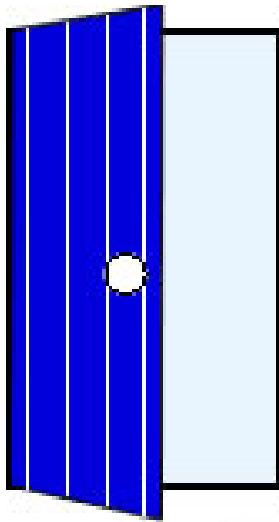


BIBLE STUDIES



Mill Lane Chapel

Titus

7) **“He saved us”**

Read Chapter 3: 1-7

We concluded our introduction to the epistle by noticing that its scope widens as it proceeds:

- **Chapter 1.** The special responsibilities of elders in the church.
- **Chapter 2.** The particular responsibilities of each category in the church.
- **Chapter 3.** The general responsibilities of everyone in the church.

The overall lesson is clear: fellowship in a local church involves responsibility. While our individual responsibilities may vary, every brother and every sister is under an obligation to ‘pull their weight’.

In our earlier studies we have referred, more than once, to the quotation from Epimenides, “The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies”, to which Paul adds, “This witness is true” (1: 12-13). In Titus 3, Paul makes it clear that he did not envisage any ‘slow-bellied’ Christians! There were to be no ‘lazy gluttons’ amongst the saints. God’s people were to be characterised by “good works”, reminding us of the words of the Lord Jesus, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5: 16). The expression “good works” or “good work” occurs six times in the epistle (1: 16; 2: 7, 14; 3: 1, 8, 14). It is worth noticing in this connection that if Chapter 2 commences and concludes with reference to speech (“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine...These things, speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority”, vv1,15) then Chapter 3 commences and concludes with “good works” (“be ready to every good work...And let our’s (some Bibles have ‘ours’) also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses”, vv1, 14).

Chapter 3 may be divided into three paragraphs: **(1)** the reason for good works” (vv1-7); **(2)** the benefit of good works (vv8-11); **(3)** the fellowship through good works (vv12-15). In each paragraph, the sphere of “good works” differs.

- In vv1-7, it is “good works” in relation to **society**: “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates...to speak evil of no man” (vv1-2).

- In vv8-11, it is “good works” in relation to **testimony**: “These things are good and profitable unto men” (v8).

- In vv12-15, it is “good works” in relation to **hospitality**: “Bring Zenias...and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them. And let our’s also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses...” (vv13-14).

1) THE REASON FOR GOOD WORKS, vv1-7

As we have noted, there is a particular emphasis here on our behaviour in relation to society. We are to be “ready to every good work” in this direction in view of all that has been accomplished for us by “the kindness and love of God our Saviour” (v4).

The structure of this first paragraph is clear: **(a)** our present behaviour (vv1-2): notice that seven virtues are mentioned here; **(b)** our past behaviour (v3): notice that seven vices are mentioned here; **(c)** the power that changed our behaviour (vv4-7). Once again we must notice the clear relationship between doctrine and practice. The change in behaviour has been accomplished by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (v5). It has been rightly said that ‘the complete Christian has doctrine and practice in balance’. This balance is evident throughout the New Testament. Examples occur in Ephesians, where chapters 1-3 deal with doctrine, and chapters 4-6 with practice, and Colossians, where chapters 1-2 and chapters 3-4 follow the same pattern. It has been said that ‘truth is moral’.

a) How we are to behave, vv1-2

“Put them in mind” (v1), meaning ‘cause them to remember’. The same word (*hupomimnsko*) is used in 2 Tim. 2: 14, “Of these things put them in remembrance”; Jude v5, “I will therefore put you in remembrance”.

There is a great need for teaching that does this. See 2 Pet.1:12-15, “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance (*hupomimnsko*, a verb meaning ‘to cause one to remember’) of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance (*hupomnesis*, a noun meaning ‘a reminding or ‘a reminder’)...Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance (*mneme*, a noun meaning ‘a memory’). Peter wrote to “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance (*hupomnesis*)” (2 Pet. 3: 1). We all need to be reminded of things we already know! At the same time, we must also remember that is very dangerous to **assume** that all the Lord’s people are thoroughly acquainted with Bible teaching in the first place. That assumption could mean that many of God’s people will **never** become acquainted with God’s word. Bible teaching must be constantly restated, not only to remind believers of “those things which are most surely believed among us” (Luke 1: 1), but to acquaint new converts with ‘the faith once delivered to the saints’ Jude v3, JND).

With this in mind, Bible teachers do well to emulate Ezra and his colleagues who “caused the people to understand the law...so they read in the book in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (Neh. 8: 7-8). Titus was to “put them in mind” in three matters:

i) “To be subject to principalities (*arche* meaning ‘rulers’) and powers (*exousia* meaning ‘authorities’, as in Rom. 13: 1-3), to obey magistrates...” The words, “obey magistrates” translates one word (*peitharkeo*), meaning ‘to

obey one in authority'. It is used of obedience to God in Acts 5: 29, 32. While there may be circumstances in which we have to say, "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5: 29), this does not mean that we must imbibe the current atmosphere of insubordination to all authority. We must remember too that what happens in the world inevitably creeps into the church.

ii) "To be ready to every good work". The word rendered "good" (*agathos*) means 'beneficial in effect'. In context (that is, the preceding and succeeding statements), the "good work" here clearly refers to our conduct in society. See also Rom. 13: 5-7, "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath (rulers are to be "a terror...to the evil", v3), but also for conscience sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers (in the sense that they are responsible to Him – even if they do not realise it - for the maintenance of law and order), attending upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom (*telos*, meaning 'toll') to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour".

iii) "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men". The words "speak evil" translate the Greek *blasphemeo*, meaning 'to rail at' or 'revile'. "To be no brawlers" means not fighting or contentious. For "gentle" see 2 Cor.10: 1, where the noun occurs: "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ". "Gentleness" means 'considerate' or 'forbearing'. "Shewing all meekness to all men" means submission: power controlled: absence of self-assertiveness and self-interest. It is an attitude of mind and heart. See 1 Cor. 4: 21 for contrast: "What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?" See also Gal. 6: 1, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted".

We should notice the clear contrasts here: God's people are to "speak evil of no man" (no railing/reviling) but be "gentle" (considerate/forbearing). They are "to be no brawlers" (no fighting/contention) but marked by "meekness" (submission, forbearance, absence of self-assertiveness). The foregoing contrasts with what we once were. So:

b) How we once behaved, v3

"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another".

"Foolish" (*anoetos*) means a 'senseless, an unworthy lack of understanding' (W.E.Vine). Vine adds, referring to this verse, 'sometimes it carries a moral reproach...and describes one who does not govern his lusts'. "Disobedient" (*apeithes*) means 'unwilling to be persuaded'. The word "deceived" (*planao*) means 'gone astray' or 'wandering in error'. Hence our English word 'planet'. The results follow:

The words, "serving (as a bond-slave) divers lusts and pleasures", describe slavery to all kinds of lusts and natural desires. It is a case of 'letting sin reign in our mortal body' (Rom. 6: 12). "Malice" (*kakia*) means badness in character, and has been defined as 'vicious hard heartedness'. It is 'an evil attitude of

mind manifesting itself in ill-will and a desire to injure' (D.E.West). "Envy" (*phthonos*) begrudges the prosperity of others. The word is used in Matt. 27: 18, "For he (Pilate) knew that for envy they had delivered him". The word "hateful" (*stugetos*, from *stugeo* meaning 'to hate') is only found here. People who are "hateful" will hate others, and this follows: "hating (*miseo*) one another".

Once again, we should notice the contrast between what we once were and what we should be now. Once we were "disobedient". The Cretans are described as 'evil wild beasts' (Titus 1: 12, JND), but Paul says "**we** ourselves also were sometimes... disobedient". Now we must be "**subject** to principalities and powers..." Once we lived "in malice" (badness). Now we are to be marked by "good works" (these are opposite words). Once "hating one another", now we are to "speak evil of no man".

The reason why our present behaviour (vv1-2) has replaced our past behaviour (v3) is now explained:

c) The power that changed our behaviour, vv4-7

Here is the reason why we are "to be ready to every good work" (v1). In one simple, yet profound phrase, "He saved us" (v5).

Our salvation is attributable to the Godhead: "God our Saviour" (v4); "renewing of the Holy Ghost" (v5); "Jesus Christ our Saviour" (v6). We behold the Godhead, with its divine unity and harmony, in the words, "Which (that is, the Holy Ghost) he (that is, God) shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour". We have been saved by the triune God. It has been said, beautifully, that in these verses we have:

- **Sovereign grace.** Everything is divine. Everything finds its source in "the kindness and love of God our Saviour" (v4).
- **Saving grace.** "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (v5).
- **Sanctifying grace.** "By the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (v5).
- **Sufficient grace.** "Which he shed on us **abundantly**, through Jesus Christ our Saviour". Divine grace has made us "heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (vv6-7).

As we have already noted, these verses display the beautiful harmony in the Godhead, and we must now consider **(i)** God, the source of salvation (vv4-5); **(ii)** the Holy Spirit, the power of salvation (v5); **(iii)** the Lord Jesus, the channel of salvation (vv6-7)

i) God, the source of salvation, vv4-5

"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according

to his mercy he saved us...” He saved us by taking **the initiative!** This reminds us of the kindness showed to Mephibosheth by David (2 Sam. 9: 1).

The dark background of the previous verse throws the “kindness and love of God our Saviour” into sharp relief. Against such a sombre background, “the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared”. As in 1: 11, the word “appeared” (*epiphano*) means ‘shined forth’. The word “kindness” (*chrestotes*) means ‘goodness’ and is so translated, for example, in Rom. 11: 22, “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God”. The word “love” (*philanthropia*) means love for men. The contrast between this and “hateful and hating one another” cannot be missed.

The words, “He saved us”, indicate a point in time. See Acts 16: 31, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”. Paul continues, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”. The word “mercy” (*eleos*), meaning the disposition of God toward the needy or ‘the outward manifestation of pity’ (W.E.Vine), assumes the dire need on the part of one who receives it. So we have divine goodness (v4), love (v5), mercy (v5) and grace (v7) against the dark background of v3! It is worth pointing out that no reference is made to the human side, not even to faith! Everything here is divine!! Read it again! “Not by works of righteousness which **we** have done, but according to **his** mercy **he** saved us”.

ii) The Holy Spirit, the power of salvation, v5

“According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing (*loutron*) of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”. See also Eph. 5: 25-26, “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing (*loutron*) of water by the word”. Whilst the noun “washing” (*loutron*) means a bath or laver, it is used here to denote the **act** of washing, rather than the vessel (bath or laver) in which the washing takes place. Compare John 13: 10, “He that is bathed (AV ‘washed’: *louo*, verb) needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit” (RV).

The context shows very clearly that we have been washed, or cleansed **from the things enumerated in v3**: “we...were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another”. Compare 1 Cor. 6: 11, “And such were some of you (see vv9-10): but ye are washed (*apolouo*: literally, ‘ye washed yourselves clean’), but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”.

This cleansing, or washing, is so effective that it is called “the washing of regeneration”. W.E.Vine explains that the word “regeneration” (*palingenesia*) (from *palin*, again, and *genesis*, birth) means ‘the communication of new life’. It refers to the same event as the new birth, but views that event from a different point of view. It is not the same word as in John 3: 3, 7 (where, according to W.E.Vine, ‘the adverb *anōthen*, anew, or from above, accompanies the simple verb *gennao*, to beget’) and 1 Peter 1: 3, 23 (*anagennao*), which refer to the commencement of new spiritual life. Here, it refers to a new state, as in Matt. 19: 28, “Verily I say unto you, That ye which

have followed me, in the **regeneration** (*palingenesia*) when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones...”

To summarise, the **new birth** refers to the **commencement** of spiritual life, whilst **regeneration** refers to the **new state** that we enjoy, as opposed to the old described above (v3).

According to the grammatical experts, “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” can refer to the same event. There can be no doubt, of course, that regeneration is accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit, but in this case, the expression “**renewing** of the Holy Ghost” is not easily understood. Creating something new, and renewing, are quite different! So far as we are concerned, “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become **new**”. (2 Cor. 5: 17). The same grammatical experts come to our rescue by saying that it is quite in order to see, not one, but two things here. In the words of D.E.Hiebert., ‘The renewing work of the Spirit, begun at regeneration, is...viewed as continuing in the life of the believer. We prefer this view’. D.E.West points out that the words, “renewing (*anakainosis*) of the Holy Ghost” do seem to ‘indicate the continual operation of the indwelling Spirit of God’. Compare Rom. 12: 2, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing (*anakainosis*) of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”. This is a continuing process. The words “washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost” are beautifully explained in Ezek. 36: 24-27. The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself!

iii) The Lord Jesus, the channel of salvation, vv6-7

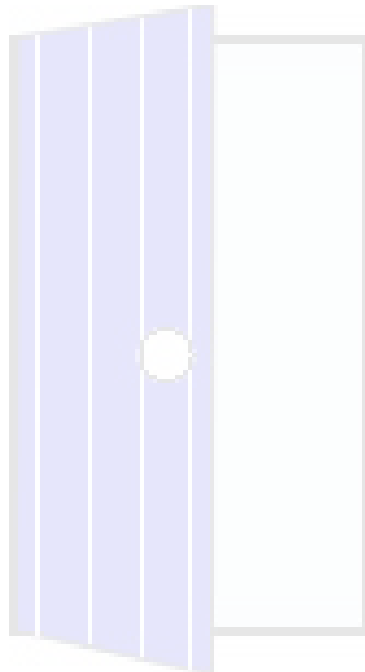
Speaking of the Holy Spirit, Paul continues, “Which he (God) shed on us abundantly through **Jesus Christ our Saviour**” or ‘which he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour’ (v6). The tense here (aorist, or past definite tense) points to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Compare Acts 2: 23 which also refers to the three Persons of the Godhead, “Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, **he** (the Lord Jesus) hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear”. Every blessing we possess has come to us through Christ.

But this is not all. God has made provision, not only for the past (“the washing of regeneration”), and the present (the “renewing of the Holy Ghost”), but also for the future. “That, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (v7). He has provided for every aspect of our salvation! The word “hope” refers here to the full realisation of eternal life. “Hope” is mentioned in each of the three chapters: 1: 2; 2: 13; 3: 7. We should remember, as previously noted, that eternal life means more than eternal existence. Unregenerate men and women will live forever. Eternal life indicates an eternal relationship with God (John 17: 3). We should notice:

- **The basis of our hope.** We are “justified by his grace”. Compare 2: 11. The word, “justification”, means to be declared or accounted righteous. It does not mean to **make** someone righteous, or holy (that is called ‘sanctification’ in the Bible); but to **account** someone righteous. W.R.Newell

puts it with crystal clarity: 'Justification is not a change wrought by God in us, but a change in our relation to God.' It is a change wrought **for** us. Amongst the many wonderful aspects of justification is the fact that it is God Himself who justifies men and women. Our position would be extremely weak if such a declaration came from us! But **God** is the "Justifier", see Rom 3: 26, 30; 8: 33. It might be helpful to notice the following: **(i)** justification is by **grace** (Rom. 3: 24): that is its **source**. **(ii)** by **blood** (Rom. 5: 9): that is its **basis**. **(iii)** by **faith** (Rom. 5: 1): that is it **means**. **(iv)** by **works** (James 2: 21): that is its **proof**.

- **The substance of our hope.** "Heirs". Don't worry overmuch if your expected inheritance turns out to be smaller than you expected: divine grace has made us "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8: 17). We cannot even begin to understand such a prospect. But this is not merely a future hope, it is a present reality. The aim, that "we should be made heirs", has been **achieved!** (D.E.Hiebert).



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